

REVIEWS

CATHOLIC ACTION

MANUEL D'ACTION CATHOLIQUE. Essai Théorique, by Mgr. Luigi Civardi. Translated from the Italian by Chan. J. Claes. (Ed. de La Cité Chrétienne, Bruxelles; 20 Belgian francs.)

In several pages of this book the author indicates that the priest who fancies that his duties terminate when he has left the sacristy has far from grasped the full meaning of his office as the ambassador of Christ. Indeed the vocation to the Christian priesthood is more than a calling, it is a sending forth to a social apostolate whereby may be spread abroad God's kingdom on earth. From this it readily follows that by vocation the clergy should be the salt and light of Catholic Action. And the further serious consequence is that unless the clergy dedicate more of their enthusiasms and energies to this Apostolic movement the laity are in danger of treating it with contempt. Hence the need for both clergy and laity of a handbook from which they may learn the mind of the Church and the place they respectively occupy in the apostolate of Catholic Action as it has been repeatedly inculcated by successive Pontiffs. Clearly without coherent knowledge there can be no co-ordinate or convergent activity within society.

Mgr. Luigi Civardi in his first volume of the *Manuale di Azione Cattolica* has done a great service in bestowing a thorough account of the theory which underlies Catholic Action. The present French translation has been taken from the seventh Italian edition, which speaks well for the success of the original. The theory only is reserved for this volume, whilst the history and practical application are to find a place in a subsequent volume. This first volume is divided into two parts, the first of these defines Catholic Action as the participation of the laity in the hierarchic apostolate of the Church. Its elements, general aims, and organization are determined and explained. In the second part there is a full account of the relations which should subsist between Catholic Action and other bodies or auxiliary works. The style, though perhaps not equally pleasing to all, reveals the scholastic texture of an Italian mind which does not appear to have lost any of its clarity by its reappearance in French dress. Almost all the arguments are supported by quotations or references to papal utterances.

We should be less apprehensive if those who as yet are not fully conscious of the need in this country for organization and co-ordination in Catholic Action will not be unwilling to turn their attention to these pages. Undoubtedly much may be learnt from them if carefully studied, and it may not be presumptuous to

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hope that a better understanding of principles may one day lead to an unhesitating application of them to the conditions which prevail within the borders of our own land.

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THE LAY APOSTOLATE. By Paul Jerome Iyer. (The Catholic Press Agency of the East, 35 Sultan Street, Klang, Federated Malay States.)

This small volume is a source of great satisfaction from more than one point of view. Its author is a convert from Brahminism (as yet a somewhat rare occurrence) and it represents a series of conferences given in English and Tamil to Indian and other Catholics throughout the Malay Peninsula. The conferences themselves were originally delivered with a view to promoting a strong Catholic Action movement amongst audiences of divers nationalities but of a single Faith, and we are convinced, to quote His Excellency the Bishop of Malacca's printed letter of appreciation, "it will diffuse light on this important matter and infuse into many the resolution to do something for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ . . . and may open the way to the organisation of a solid and energetic Catholic Action in the diocese of Malacca." The author's Foreword is admirable in its humility and completely Catholic tone. The Conferences themselves, couched in surprisingly good and forceful English, cover the ground of the Lay Apostolate in a very satisfactory manner. For so recent a convert, his grasp of the meaning of the Kingdom of Christ is profound and his copious use of the New Testament most apt.

He rightly bases the notion of the Lay Apostolate on the Commandment of Fraternal Charity. "Catholics are spiritually rich and their duty is to impart these spiritual riches to those that are poor and neglected. . . . The Samaritan could have said: 'Why should I trouble myself? Is not helping the wounded man the duty of the Priests?'" "According to the Christian conception, the love of our neighbour is based on our love of God. . . . As the love each one should have for himself consists, above all, in praying and working for his own salvation, each one's love for his neighbour should also show itself by prayer and work for the neighbour's salvation. Our love for mankind must not only be mere attitude of mind. . . . It is a common error among the laity to think that the apostolate is the exclusive concern of the clergy. . . . The necessary interdependence of the clergy and the laity can neither be gainsaid nor avoided." In considering the practical ways of this apostolate the author wisely remarks that "personal example goes a longer way than mere precept." He recognizes, however, that "ignorance of the